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ABSTRACT

The rescheduled school year is suggested as a means by which teaching and learning can be made much more attractive to the student, the teacher, and the taxpayer. The author cites the tremendous explosion of knowledge, the loss of learning from extended vacations, and the time spent tooling up and down for school as reasons why student attendance should be based on a 200-210 day school calendar in which students attend school in rotating shifts throughout the year. According to the author, a rescheduled school year would provide teachers with greater flexibility in class scheduling, thereby allowing more time for planning and curriculum development and, with schools in operation 12 months a year, teachers could expect appropriate salary increase adjustments. (Author/DN)

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A TWELVE MONTH CONTRACT FOR A CONTINUOUS LEARNING YEAR PROGRAM

by

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A TWELVE MONTH CONTRACT FOR A CONTINUOUS
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Once upon a time the classroom teacher fell into the category of the poor relative. Today, the picture is changing. Many non-educators who read about a national median of $8,600 for a ten month school year are apt to say "Whoa" when new salary demands are presented. Their protests get louder when it is pointed out to them that a few school districts will pay beginning teachers a minimum salary of $8,000 while experienced teachers will receive in excess of $12,500. In these school systems the median teacher salary will approximate $10,000.

Inflation and new teacher negotiating power has helped teachers win salary increases which few educators thought possible. Now the dream of a $10,000 minimum salary is within the realm of reality. However, the goal can be realized much faster if teachers will negotiate their contracts in terms of something more than a part time job. It is time that teachers be recognized as year round employees with all the rights and privileges given to others who are employed on that basis.

For years professional teacher groups have compared average teacher salaries with employees who work twelve months of the year. The salary earned in the extra two months has helped to accentuate the difference in take home pay of teachers and other types of workers, professional and non-professional. If teachers will support recommended year round school year plans which combine the objectives of economy and increased learning time for children, the public will be able to pay teachers a salary which will make them the envy of many other professional groups

The Educational Need--The Explosion of Knowledge

Nobody can stop the presses from rolling. Every day books, magazines, pamphlets, circulars, papers and numerous other written documents reports new explorations, achievements, and happenings. But this is just the beginning.

Film, tape, and other recording devices are helping to transmit the story of man even more vividly than the printed page. Teachers have to help boys and girls cope with the knowledge explosion. They have to face the realities of life.

1. Children who need to solve tomorrow's problems are going to have to find answers for themselves. They are going to have to work in a school or learning environment where teachers cannot begin to provide the answer they need. All teachers are going to have to use technology to help children learn. Schools will have to be storehouses of knowledge where teachers guide students in their search for information and an understanding of what they discover. The day of the telling teacher is almost over.

2. Time to teach and time to learn. One of the relics of the horse and buggy era is the 180 day school year. It came into existence in New York State in 1913 and in many other states shortly afterward, if not before. There was no reason for a ten month school calendar at that time except an agrarian pressure for cheap summer labor plus a reluctance on the part of taxpayers to provide much more than a minimal program of education. Teachers, women especially, let themselves fall into the trap of the ten month contract and then have moaned and groaned because teaching was an impossible job. Thirty years ago the writer's friends tore the May symbol off the calendar and loudly proclaimed that they would be lucky if they could get their history classes beyond the Spanish-American War. World War I and the problems of the early decads of the Twentieth Century would probably remain untouched. Where are these teachers and their modern counterparts. Are they still facing their classes under the pressure of time? Conscientious teachers need a solution to their time problem. Technology and new patterns of school organization will help, but ultimately they are going to have to face up to the fact that children can only scratch the surface as long as they schools operate on a part time basis.

A Look At the Regression Problem

Extended vacations steal valuable learning time from boys and girls. All children, especially the disadvantaged and the slow learners, forget much that they learn. The loss in skill and proficiency as well as knowledge is evident in our textbooks and classroom practices. Review and reteaching can be the least exciting

part of a teacher or student's world. Yet, much of September and even subsequent months are devoted to this kind of teaching. This waste motion can be avoided with the adoption of a continuous learning year. Everyone needs vacations, but they do not have to be so long that a large part of the learning year will be devoted to boring and tiresome makeup exercises. Give teachers this time to introduce new worlds and skill and teaching and learning can become more enjoyable to all concerned.

Tool Down, Tool Up

Many years ago a principal said, "Dr. No Name, isn't there any way that we could close school one week early. This last week of school is murder. We don't do anything." Dr. No Name laughed and replied, "We could lop a week off the calendar, but what good will it do you. The last week and all of its wasteful activity will just come earlier." Both men were referring to the "Tooling Down Process." In many schools marks are turned in two and even three weeks before graduation. Frequently, teachers try to keep this knowledge from the children because of a fear that the children will be impossible to hold without the pressure of marks. Many schools start "tooling down" at Memorial Day. Books are collected, inventories are taken, endless reviews or meaningless drill periods are held, endless record forms are filled out. June for the most part becomes filled with exercises in futility. Then in September comes "Tooling Up" time. Books are passed out, new records are started and children go through a period of readjustment.

The loss of time in the "tooling up" and "tooling down" activities is a disgrace. It is a waste of human talent and energy that could be saved with the adoption of a continuous learning year. New technical aids can be used to provide an updated record system, one which has meaning to those who need records and one which does not require ten thousand dollar teachers to engage in frustrating activities while children go through meaningless exercises because teachers have little time to concentrate on anything better.

Planning Time

Good teaching requires planning time. This is especially true where teacher teaming is recognized as a prerequisite to the solution of the problem of individual difference. Planning time for teaming must be recognized as a part of the teaching day. All teachers, primary as well as high school, must have time to meet during the day. This should be a daily period and not a once a week affair.

The old self-contained classroom approach to teaching could ignore planning time. She made her plans at home or on the run. Today, teaching should be diagnostically oriented. Teachers should individually and collectively prepare to teach in terms of a written or oral prescription. One solution is a longer day with a built-in planning period, not a rest period. Another is the lengthened school year with a time equalization factor which will give teachers adequate planning time in the regular school day.

The Search for Knowledge

Yesterdays college courses are not enough for a prolonged period of teaching. Teachers are going to have to keep up with their children. As the schools become repositories for a vast body of knowledge on tape, film, and the printed page, the teachers are going to have to have access to the new media. They are unlikely to have facilities in their homes to study, therefore, they should have time to use the resources of the school. Preparation time may be something apart from planning time. Teachers must be given time to listen to recordings, to view films and filmstrips and time to catch up on the research.

On alternative is to return to college periodically for a brush-up course, but the real answer may be in the restructured school day and school year.

Curriculum Revision

New teacher contracts are beginning to contain provisions which make it virtually impossible to hold curriculum meetings after school without payment for overtime. This means that curriculum work is something that will have to be done during the school day.

Some schools are meeting this issue through the employment of teachers to work on curriculum revision on Saturdays or during July and August. So far this has been done in some school districts for a pittance. If the work is to be done and done well, teachers should be given the time to do the work as a part of the regular year, especially where it is essential to test new materials and ideas in the actual classroom. In return for professional work the compensation should be based upon rates established for the regular teaching year.

A Twelfth Month Teaching Contract

Teachers should be employed as full time employees. This means on a twelve month basis. During the year they may engage in a wide variety of activities. Some may teach for twelve months while others may divide their year between curriculum development, research, inservice training, and teaching. The twelve month contract will provide vacation periods similar to those received by those who work in business or industry.

Studies have shown that three, four, and five week vacations are commonplace in the business and industrial world. However, many employees are restricted to a maximum of two weeks in the summer. Additional time may be taken in the fall, winter or spring. The nation has moved to year round vacationing. Today, the school has been a barrier to an expansion of this new pattern of living. With adoption of recommended year round school plans and a continuous progress philosophy, everyone including teachers can take needed breaks throughout the year.

Supportive Staff

The use of special teachers in the elementary school has given many teachers a rest period or time for planning. In the future all school systems will have to employ a number of different types of supportive helpers. These may be full or part time professional teachers, technicians, teacher aides, clerks, or other specialists who can relieve teachers to engage in activities which may or may not relate to the teaching process. For example, a number of floating teachers can be employed who will join in the team planning activities and curriculum work in order to be prepared to fill in when the teachers elect to take a fall, winter, spring or summer recess.

Teacher Classes and Periods

Many teachers are pressuring school boards for a reduction in the number of teaching periods. For some reason English teachers have been able to win a four class load maximum. With good planning, diagnostic teaching, teacher teaming and the use of multi-media, the English teachers would have no justification for their demands. Good teachers in other subject fields need just as much relief as the English teachers, but this argument over the number of teaching classes and/or periods tend to fall into the nit picking category.

There is no reason why the school day and school year cannot be rescheduled to provide a new learning day or week. Through time equalization, teacher planning, and flexible scheduling, teachers can teach six subjects over the course of a twelve month period and still have no heavier load than they have at present. Actually, the teacher-pupil contacts should be less per week as the teacher role changes.

A teaching load of six classes does not mean six classes a day. Pupils can meet as a class or in sections three times a week or less with the development of resource centers and with the use of supportive staff. Teacher schedules for a

lengthened school year have been developed for teachers with a six class provision that have looked mighty attractive to many teachers. One of these releases teachers for a full day to work on curriculum, engage in research, or other types of work which does not require pupil—teacher contact. Even more attractive has been one that frees teachers for the major portion of two days. Since these two schedules were based upon an eleven month school year of 210 days, these are infinite possibilities in a schedule based upon a slightly longer school year.

Recommended Extended School Year Designs

Student attendance should be predicated upon a 200 to 210 day school calendar. The minimal requirements will give students some of the additional time they need in preparation for life in the 21st century. With a stress upon continuous progress and the individualization of progress the new school year should not be segmented into terms, quarters, quadrimesters, or trimesters. The Continuous Learning Year Cycling Plan with its multiple two week vacations may be considered as a prototype of the Extended School Year Designs which can be adopted. With the added time equalization features of the Multiple Trails Extended School Year plan the new pattern of school organization will release space and teacher time and the corresponding dollars necessary to pay the cost of air conditioning, year round school operation expenses and a professional twelve month salary.

Other variations or extended school year plans can be adopted, but if they are to provide funds for the new climate for teaching and learning they must do more than provide minimal education. This will wipe out the staggered quarter extended school year plan and a number of year round school plans based upon the freedom of choice attendance pattern. Few, if any, voluntary student participation plans will pay for themselves unless they (1) lead to a large degree of student acceleration or (2) guarantee a series of year round recess periods to insure a balanced teacher-pupil and pupil-class ratio throughout the school year.

The taxpayers can pay teachers a guaranteed twelve month salary, but the role of the teacher under the new contract must be one which calls for a new look at teaching procedures and administrative policies. With a rescheduled school year teaching and learning can be made much more attractive to student, teacher, and taxpayer.